

W Hereas there was an Act made in the 12th. year of this King; Entituled, An Act for the Creating and Establishing a Post Office; Wherein the Postage of LETTERS for His Majesties Dominions is exprest; And also a Schedule of Rates for Foreign Letters: In which Act there is a *Proviso* in the words following.

Provided always, That all Merchants Accounts, not exceeding one Sheet of Paper, and all Bills of Exchange, Invoices, (or Bills of Parcels,) and Bills of Lading, are, and shall hereby be understood to be allowed without Rate in the Price of the Letters; And likewise the Covers of Letters, (not exceeding the fourth part of a Sheet of Paper,) sent to Marseilles, Venice or Legorn, to be sent towards Turkey, shall be understood to pass without Rate, or Payment for the same.

The said Clause or *Proviso* (as is humbly conceived,) ought to be apply'd to the Body of the Act, and not restrain'd, (as the Post-master doth,) to Foreign Letters only, excluding His Majesties Subjects, and the Trade of the Three Kingdoms from the just Right and Claim, or Benefit thereof, by Extorting Rates for every such Account, Bill of Exchange, Invoice, [or Bill of Parcels, or Patterns of less bulk or weight,] or Bill of Lading, or Cover of a Letter, as for a Double Letter; So that in that circumstance, a Letter may go cheaper to Constantinople, than to Bristol, or Place of that Distance, contrary to the exprest Words and Meaning, the literal Sense or Reason of the said Clause: And for that it cannot be imagined the PARLIAMENT should either so far forget themselves, or the Countrey for which they served, or the necessary and convenient Correspondence, as well as the Trade of His Majesties Dominions, as to put them upon worse and harder terms than Foreigners; or Foreign Trade, to the Prejudice of the Kingdom, taking more than the Law allows by above Twenty thousand pounds per annum; whilst the Revenue is said to produce to the Duke of York yearly above forty thousand pounds more than it was valued at the time it was granted.

Complaints have been made hereof a long time, and the Post-master threatned with Indictments, but the charge of Prosecution was too great for any Private Person to wrestle with so great a Power; And some who were most concern'd, being allow'd to tax their own Letters, to keep them from joyning in the Prosecution, nothing was done therein. A Petition complaining of this Abuse and Extortion, was Presented in the late long Parliament, and referred to a Committee, wherein a Noble Lord had the Chair; But they very seldom met to effect a Redress: And in the late Parliament the Complaint was again revived; but before any thing could be done, the House was Dissolv'd.

It is now Humbly Prayed, that this Honourable House will give their Judgement on that Proviso, to the intent the Correspondence and Trade in General, may receive its just Benefit and Encouragement; And that the Votes and News-Books for the Information of the Kingdom, may go free, as heretofore, with what else this Honourable House shall think fit.

2. march. 1685